

# COMMUNICATION RATIONALE



**March 2022**

*As a rights Respecting School we believe that all children have the right to an education, Article 28*

## **The Pines Special School** **Communication Rationale**

The purpose of this rationale is to set out a whole school approach to communication. It provides guidance for all staff, new and experienced and it will underpin the continued development of the school as a learning community.

### **Definition of communication**

*'The imparting or exchanging of information by speaking, writing, or using some other medium'.* (Dictionary, 2019)

The National Curriculum for English 2014 states that English reflects the importance of spoken language in pupils' development across the whole curriculum and teachers should therefore ensure the continual development of pupils' confidence and competence in spoken language and listening skills.

### **Communication for Children with Autism**

For children at The Pines communication can be difficult, therefore the way we communicate and encourage communication needs to be adapted to suit the needs of our children.

Children with ASC may have difficulty developing language skills and understanding what others say to them. They also often have difficulty communicating nonverbally, such as through hand gestures, eye contact, and facial expressions.

The ability of children with ASC to communicate and use language depends on their intellectual and social development. Some children with ASC may not be able to communicate using speech or language, and some may have very limited speaking skills. Others may have rich vocabularies and be able to talk about specific subjects in detail. Many have problems with the meaning and rhythm of words and sentences. They also may be unable to understand body language and the meanings of different vocal tones. Taken together, these difficulties affect the ability of children with ASC to interact with others, especially people their own age (nidcd 2019).

### **Aims**

To ensure that all classrooms are 'Communication Friendly' environments to optimise learning and ensure that all students meet their communication potential.

To provide a communication friendly environment, all staff will;

- Differentiate their language levels to ensure students can access auditory learning

- Use visual support to enhance engagement and comprehension of language (objects of reference, photographs, symbols or Makaton signs)
- Provide appropriate communication learning opportunities throughout the day and curriculum with the support of the SALT team
- Ensure that students have access to symbols to support their learning and help demonstrate their knowledge
- Provide a means for students to make routine choices throughout the day across the school and consistently model and teach the use of these methods
- Consistently use a visual schedule with students to support their understanding of the order of the day and reduce anxiety around necessary changes to routine
- Be sympathetic to communication needs and encourage communication through positive encouragement and reinforcement of communication attempts
- Consistently use Makaton signs to enhance communication, interaction and understanding across the school day.

### **Strategy for Implementation**

#### **Language Levels**

Due to many children at The Pines having communication difficulties language is adapted to suit the needs of our children. Language used in and around school is limited and may only involve one or two key words, where appropriate. Children at The Pines may also need extra processing time, therefore when communicating with a child staff will give the child extra time to respond before repeating the instruction or request if needed. Symbols or Makaton signs may also be used to aid understanding.

#### **PECS**

Picture Exchange Communication System is a unique alternative/augmentative communication.

As a school for children with communication difficulties, it is imperative that symbols and PECS are used in as many lessons throughout the day as possible. PECS is used for communicating wants and needs and for cross-curricular learning. For example, during an Art lesson a child could choose which colour paint they want to use by requesting it using their sentence strip.

Children will be introduced to PECS as soon as they start The Pines School in EYFS. In-year referrals will be assessed by the class teacher and SALT team. A collaborative decision will be made as to whether the child will be introduced to PECS.

The expectation is that children continue to use and progress in PECS, if it is their preferred means of communication, throughout the school.

Each class will have access to a PECS trolley containing motivating resources and symbols. Classroom staff are responsible for ensuring PECS folders are replenished as well as the PECS trolley.

PECS folders will be have a consistent appearance throughout the school.

### **Symbol Support**

All classrooms, and some M classrooms where appropriate, have symbols readily available and accessible for the children to be able to communicate their wants and needs. These classes have a standard set of wants and needs plus any additional symbols they may need for their class.

Symbols are used during teaching time to aid understanding of teaching intentions and to embed topic vocabulary.

Communication stations are used throughout the school in well-used areas, such as the playground, main hall, performance hall, sensory rooms and sensory circuit room.

Communication stations are boards of symbols accessible to the children so they can communicate their needs easily.

Symbols and photos are used in the dinner hall to aid the children's communication during dinnertime and encourages them to use communication to make choices.

All classroom have visual timetables to help the children to understand what their day looks like. Visual timetables can help to ease children's anxieties ensuring they are ready to learn.

All staff wear a keyring lanyard with symbols to ensure children are able to access symbols at all times and communicate with adults.

### **Speech and Language Therapy:**

All children with communication needs will be assigned to one of three different 'Partner Profiles' (taken from the SCERTS model ). These profiles are

Social Partner Profile

Language Partner Profile and

Conversational Partner Profile.

Each students' communication strengths and needs are informally assessed by school staff and the SALT team and he/she is given a Communication Profile which baselines strengths and needs and communication objectives across 4 different aspects of communication, appropriate to the Partner stage.

In order to meet the objectives identified within the Profile, each student will receive regular timetabled interventions with the SALT team. Classroom communication champions are/have been identified and trained to enable them to support these interventions and ensure that continued opportunities are available back in the classroom.

Both the SALT team and the class staff collect data across the year to inform progress and facilitate progression through the partner communication stages.

On occasions, students have needs that cannot be met using this pathway and they will receive more specialist and support in the way of formal assessment and specific individualised communication objectives.

The SALT team have a duty to work with senior school leaders to ensure that staff training needs are identified and addressed accordingly.

### **Makaton**

Makaton is taught once a month to staff in a morning briefing.

The children are taught Makaton signs in assembly through signs of the week.

A dojo message is sent to parents once a week by SLTA to introduce 1 sign of the week for parents to use at home.

### **Monitoring**

Communication will be monitored through learning walks of the environment and lesson observations.

PECS progress will be monitored through the use of an additional assessment sheet available in classroom communication folders.

PECS use within the classroom and in lessons will be monitored through learning walks and lesson observations.

Speech and Language targets will be monitored and assessed termly by SLTA. Classroom staff will complete the termly target sheet to inform SLTA of progress in the classroom.

### **Conclusion**

This rationale sets out the intentions of The Pines School with regard to communication. Opportunities for discussion of any issue relating to this rationale will be made available and any concerns should be raised, in the first instance, with the post-holder.